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INFO ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
CIS COLLECTIVE  
NATO EU COLLECTIVE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0048  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0241  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 001575

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO USOFFICE ALMATY  
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG  
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA  
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/11/09

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SUBJECT: Sanjar Umarov Released on November 7

CLASSIFIED BY: Holly Lindquist Thomas, P/E Officer, State, Tashkent;  
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) Opposition leader Sanjar Umarov was released from prison on November 7. The next day, he came to the Embassy for a conversation with Ambassador Norland and Embassy staffers. Still in disbelief over the events of the previous two days, he expressed his gratitude for everyone's efforts in securing his release.

#### A Four-Year Walk

12. (C) Umarov appeared gaunt, swimming in a suit that no doubt fit him during his days as a businessman and budding political figure. He described how one night four years ago he went out for a walk, was picked up by police, and never returned. He said that for a long time he couldn't believe that he was put in jail, but then couldn't believe that he would ever get out. Neither guards nor prison officials had given him any indication of his impending release, so it was quite a shock when he was given his civilian clothes back on Saturday morning and told the news. He described returning to his house and heading out into the neighborhood to complete his "four-year walk," the longest of his life ("one for the Guinness Book of Records," he joked).

#### Public Response

13. (C) Ambassador Norland expressed that the U.S. does not intend to politicize Umarov's release, and that the Department intends to take a low-key approach with the press. Ambassador Norland emphasized that although Umarov and his family will make their own decisions as to how to respond publicly to his release, he hoped that they would consider the plight of other political prisoners in Uzbekistan, and how the family's actions might impact their situations. Umarov's release had been the product of extended quiet diplomacy and engagement, which had secured a degree of trust. Umarov agreed that engagement was critical.

## Umarov's Next Steps

14. (SBU) In the short-term, Umarov stated that he is focused on getting back to his family and catching up on all he has missed in the last four years. (Note: He spoke of having a video call with his wife on Saturday using Skype technology - something that didn't exist in Uzbekistan (or anywhere, really) four years ago. Quite a change for the man who was the first to bring cell phones to Uzbekistan.)

15. (C) In the long-term, Umarov seemed to think he may still have some role to play in Uzbekistan, or possibly with Uzbekistan-U.S. relations. He talked about agriculture and how there is room for cooperation with the United States to improve agricultural efficiency. He spoke about Uzbekistan's economic potential, as well as about how Uzbekistan needs to improve its relations with the Islamic world.

## Post's Next Steps

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16. (C) Umarov had the medical check-up required for his visa today, and tomorrow will apply for his Uzbek exit visa. (Note: The MFA has assured Post that the exit visa will be granted quickly.) After that, Post will finalize his visa processing, and he will be on his way to the United States accompanied by a family friend - hopefully later this week.  
NORLAND